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MORE BALTIC COMMENTS ON KOZYREV STATEMENT. Officials in Estonia and Latvia on 19 April reacted strongly to the remarks by Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev the previous day that Moscow reserves the right to use military force to protect Russian living abroad, Western agencies reported. Estonian President Lennart Meri considered the timing of Kozyrev's remarks very inappropriate, coming shortly before the celebrations marking the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe. The Estonian Foreign Ministry asked Moscow for an explanation of Kozyrev's remarks but has not yet received a reply. It issued a statement noting with anxiety that Russia used similar slogans about defending the rights of Russian-speakers before invading Chechnya and killing tens of thousands of civilians. -- Saulius Girnius, OMRI, Inc.

LATVIA PREPARES AGREEMENT ON REFUGEES. Atis Sjanits, deputy state secretary for juridical and consular issues at the Latvian Foreign Ministry, said his ministry has prepared a draft agreement on taking back refugees who have no right to stay in the territory of a neighboring state, BNS reported on 19 April. Delegations from the Baltic foreign ministries and immigration officials will meet in Riga on 27 April to discuss this agreement and a similar one prepared by Estonia. Sjanits noted that although Latvia has sent notes to Russia and Belarus proposing talks on illegal migration issues, neither state has as yet responded. -- Saulius Girnius, OMRI, Inc.

U.S. BANK SUGGESTS FINANCING HALF OF LITHUANIAN OIL TERMINAL PROJECT. Representatives of the U.S. company Fluor Daniel brought to Lithuania on 18 April a letter of intent signed by the vice president of the U.S.-based EXIM bank promising to meet 50-60% of the construction costs of the planned floating oil terminal at Butinge, BNS reported the next day. The offer is conditional on Lithuania's paying the remainder. Fluor Daniel designed the terminal project and began to help Lithuania to find financing for it when the Russian oil giant Lukoil refused to participate in the project, scaring away interested Western companies. The terminal is expected to cost around $200 million. All the equipment and technologies would be purchased in the U.S. if Lithuania and EXIM reach an agreement. -- Saulius Girnius, OMRI, Inc.

WORK ON UNDERWATER CABLE BETWEEN ESTONIA AND SWEDEN HALTED. The Estonian National Maritime Inspectorate has ordered the Estonian Telephone Co. to stop installing an underwater cable between Estonia and Sweden because it runs through the spawning grounds of fish and a registered deposit of therapeutic mud, BNS reported on 18 April. The company may have to pay for damage inflicted on the country's fish reserves and for spoiling the mud deposit. These costs would undoubtedly result in higher telephone charges. The Environment Ministry is evaluating the damage and establishing a commission that will draw up a list of principles and regulations. The company will also have to pay fines to its Swedish and Danish partners. It is unclear when and how the work will continue. -- Saulius Girnius, OMRI, Inc.